



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE SEWANEE REVIEW

VOL. XIV.]

OCTOBER, 1906.

[No. 4.

THE FEMININE SOUL OF THE RENAISSANCE

Of all civilizations that of Greece was the most delightful. Beauty was the object of its idolatry, happiness sagaciously pursued its highest aim. Men lived blithely the days that were allotted, and lay down calmly to their final sleep. Their ideal was serenity, serene beauty, serene strength, serene wisdom. They were born idealists. They sought ever the highest types through the infinite mutations of individual imperfection. They studied the soul of humanity, seeking to evolve the perfect man and the perfect woman, not the particular soul, with its weakness and its strength, its greatness and its folly, as Shakespeare presents it. They conceived of the gods as only men and women, stronger, wiser, more beautiful than mankind, and dowered with eternal youth; but lifted so little above humanity that mortals might aspire to resemble them; and it was the god-like man, the god-like woman, whom they rejoiced to portray with brush and chisel, of whom they sang in songs that will resound through all the ages.

But in this incomparable civilization woman had little part. In Athens and Ionia wives and daughters were shut up in the gynæceum almost as closely as the women of the East are secluded in the harem. In an age when books were few, when education was imparted by listening to the traveller who told his tales in the market-place, to the orator who spoke in the public assemblies, to the poet who recited his verses or the philosopher who discoursed in the streets and porticoes, the women, immured

in their houses, were necessarily condemned to ignorance. Cut off from all intercourse with intelligent men, expected to be mere household ornaments or drudges, it is not surprising that they became the idle gossips whom Aristophanes delights to satirize. Having deprived them of every means of self-improvement, men scorned them and ridiculed their want of cultivation. It is true that a few of the hetairai, like Sappho and Aspasia, were women of marvelous genius and exquisite culture; but having burst through the bounds of womanly decorum, they could not demand respect, and in their refinement and intelligence they were rare exceptions in a degraded class.

Upon Greek civilization women therefore exercised almost no influence. Those who were respected were too ignorant and childish; those who had more information could command no esteem. It is true that at Sparta boys and girls received the same education; but that education was little more than physical training; and Sparta, far from contributing to the progress of Greek culture, excluded it from her borders as completely as she could. The civilization of Greece was almost purely masculine. Sappho was a poetess of unequalled splendor and Corinna was esteemed a worthy rival of Pindar, so gorgeous in his imagery, so magnificent in his diction; but they were isolated examples. The influence of woman is not exerted in such superb exceptions; it is a constant force that should be felt at every fireside and through every day; holding up before the eyes of men a living model of refinement, of purity, of gentleness, of humanity. That influence was lacking to the Greeks in their palmy days.

In more distant ages woman had occupied a much loftier position. Homer depicts to us a society in which men and women are substantially equal, where they sit together at the same banquets and mingle in the same conversations. And of all women that have been pictured in prose or verse, those of Homer are the most perfect. The whole domain of literature furnishes us no example of a woman so sweet, so strong, so tender as Andromache, Hector's matchless spouse. As the Venus of Praxiteles was the most perfect female type that the artist ever executed, so Andromache stands supreme among the

creations of poets, the most splendid revelation of ideal womanhood.

From the fact that to the Greeks we owe the highest types of female perfection the inference would be natural that woman among them exerted a proportionate influence. But the contrary is the case. They did not love and reverence the sex sufficiently to study the individual woman with her varying moods, her capricious fancies, the endless permutations of a heart too sensitive to be serenely perfect. Idealists by nature, they did not observe the individual woman around them, but dreamed of the consummate type of female loveliness and virtue, and bodied forth the vision with a realistic power and an ideal beauty vouchsafed to them alone. Praxiteles is said to have created his Venus out of the perfect parts of many imperfect female forms, and Andromache lived only in the intense vision of the blind old Homer. A modern will love a woman till she seems faultless in his eyes and all her frailties will be portrayed as charms. The Greek was not so blinded. He looked ever beyond the real women about him to the standard of all womanhood of which he dreamed.

And so, while the female types that Greek literature and art have made are the eternal models of an ideal excellence, they are deficient in womanly charm. They are mere patterns of unattainable perfection. We have an unbounded admiration for Andromache and Penelope; they are infinitely superior as women to Ophelia or Desdemona, but we could not love them as we could love Shakespeare's women. The fair young Nausicaä who received the ship-wrecked Ulysses as became the daughter of a King is the fairest type of girlhood in all the range of literature; but we could not die for her as we could for a rosebud dropped from Juliet's balcony. They are too perfect, too free from feminine weaknesses, to possess the enthralling charm of womanhood.

And so it is with the works of antique art. It is the grace of the form, the perfection of the lineaments that it portrays, not the quivering soul, the palpitating heart. We admire infinitely the beauty and strength of the Venus of Melos, the rounded grace of the Venus de Medici; but there is in them nothing to

awaken love. They are so perfect that they have lost that essence of the eternal womanly that is so alluring to the soul of man. We look upon them as types, not as women we could take to our bosom. In their calm faces there are none of those delicate fancies, of that exquisite sensibility, of those ever changing moods that fascinate us in the sex. The body is there, the mind is there, but the fluttering soul is not yet awake.

Not only are these beautiful women too perfect to inspire love in merely mortal breasts, but it is clear that they have never loved. The over-mastering passion which, as Lord Byron says, is woman's whole existence, has never come with its magic touch to wake their hearts to life. No doubt the women of antiquity loved very much as they do to-day. No doubt their hearts fluttered in their breasts, no doubt their days were filled with infinite yearnings and their nights with dreams that alternately tortured and rejoiced their souls; no doubt they had the exquisite fancies, the brooding fears, the futile hopes, the delicate sentiments of modern women; but of all these the artist, his mind fixed on an ideal of impossible excellence of which the living women around him were but faint suggestions, was utterly oblivious. He looked beyond them to the woman of his imagination, to the goddess of absolute beauty, upon whose unaltered brow sat the glorious crown of serene perfection, whose every movement should be grace, whose every lineament should be faultless, and to whom the weakness of her sex should be unknown. They sought to pluck the stars from heaven, and overlooked the flowers of rarest fragrance that bloomed on every side. Despite the fact that Greece produced the greatest poetess of all the ages, her art, her literature, and her thought are essentially masculine. The women that her sculptors and her poets show us are beautiful beyond compare, but only their exterior is revealed. Neither sculptor nor poet listens to the heart that flutters like a dove in its cage of polished ivory, neither follows the soul in its wayward flights. They value a woman not as a separate entity, the more interesting by reason of those very imperfections that contribute to her individuality, but as a more or less successful embodiment of an ideal type.

To see of how little weight was woman in the civilization of

Greece we have only to turn to the songs of love. Read the odes of Anacreon or the elegies of Tibullus. Unquestionably love is there, fierce, passionate love; but it is not the love of the soul. It is as simple as the love of the lion for the lioness, of the dove for its mate. It is too simple, of too little psychological interest to form a satisfactory basis either for the drama or the romance. Now every novel is a study of love, every drama is devoted to its portrayal. But the tragedies of Greece dealt with other passions, and Greek romances were only stories of adventure where the tender passion plays but a subordinate part. Half the literature of to-day is devoted to the dissection of the female heart, and to the Greeks it would appear but foolishness.

The position of woman in Rome was much higher than in Greece. Few women have been treated with the respect paid to the Roman matrons, and few have deserved so much. But they were born and trained to be the wives and mothers of soldiers, and their virtues partook too much of sternness to possess great feminine allurements. They resembled their husbands and their sons too closely to influence them much. The same high courage, the same fierce patriotism, the same civil virtue that nerved the husband in the conflict burned in the bosom of the wife; and if she possessed them not, she did her best to conceal her weakness. Her highest ambition was to be worthy of him and worthy in his own manner. She was a strong helpmate in the hour of danger, the faithful guardian of his household gods; but as her sentiments and feelings were the same, her association could not change him greatly.

Such was the Roman matron when at her best. Her ideal was too lofty, too far removed from the weakness of her sex, to be always attained; but when she failed to reach it, she was more apt to fall into the vices of a Messalina or an Agrippina than to develop the delicate charms which in the modern woman exert so potent a fascination.

For reasons too complex for easy solution the civilization of antiquity stagnated at an early day. Alexander the Great died 323 B.C., and after his death art and literature steadily declined and science and philosophy made no tangible advance. It is therefore not likely that the position of woman or her social in-

fluence would have undergone any sensible alteration had conditions remained unchanged.

But there came two great events, which completely overturned established conditions, and created a new heaven and a new earth. The new world was converted to Christianity and was then overwhelmed by the fearful deluge of the barbaric invasion.

The advent of Christianity at first produced little effect upon the conception of womanhood either in literature or in art. By the time that the new faith had become paramount the human mind had so decayed that it was incapable of a fresh creation. It could only reproduce old forms with bungling inefficiency. And no doubt the hearts of the women were as degenerate as the minds of the men, equally desiccated, equally worn out and dead to new impressions. Moreover, the very perfection of the ancient masterpieces paralyzed the genius of invention. They were so numerous and so satisfying that it seemed useless to produce anything more and impossible to produce anything better. If the world had remained as it was in the days of Constantine, it is not likely that all the succeeding ages would have given us one masterwork of poetry, sculpture or painting. But when humanity seemed sunk into a stagnation from which nothing could arouse it, there came a deluge that swept the universe away and from which there was to be born a new world.

There is perhaps no period so revolting to contemplate as the centuries that followed the overthrow of the Roman Empire. By the common consent of mankind they have been called the Dark Ages; and they are pre-eminently the blackest era in the history of our race. The civilized people of the South were trampled under foot by the hordes of brutal barbarians from the North, whose only law was force, whose only right was in the sword, whose only culture was in the arts of taking human life. They scorned the weaker races whom they had overcome; they reduced them to virtual slavery, and treated them with such cruelty that the conquered soon degenerated into swinish brutes that live only to till the soil and perform menial offices for their arrogant masters. And the masters themselves degenerated almost as much as their serfs. As free warriors in the northern

forests they possessed at least a soldier's virtues; but when ruling with irresponsible power over cringing slaves and surrounded with all the allurements of the South, lawless authority bred in them the vices of tyrants, and an unwonted luxury led to multitudinous corruptions. So lords and villains continually reacted on one another, each making the other viler year by year, until the world was shrouded in a gloom and misery such as it had never known.

It was the most credulous of all the ages. Every day a miracle was proclaimed, and nobody doubted, nobody demanded proofs. Savages readily accept the supernatural, because their own observation is too slight to note the limitations of natural phenomena. Their ignorance is such that the natural and the supernatural appear equally probable. But that was not so with the people of the Middle Ages. They recognized the supernatural character of their miracles, and hailed them as manifestations of superhuman power. They believed because they wished to believe. The souls of vast numbers were quivering with desire for the spirit land. Through fasting, prayer and a mortification of the flesh they were in a state of ecstasy. Their highest ambition was to cast aside completely their vesture of clay and to live as palpitating spirits; and so nearly did they succeed that the real lost its hold upon them, and they dwelt in a world of dreams. Of course, the vast majority of the commonplace humanity lived swinishly upon the solid earth, eating and drinking, warring and loving; but while they could not follow the ecstatic souls in their heavenward flight, they looked upon them with blind reverence, and were ready to accept all the miracles they announced in the frenzy born of self-imposed hunger, thirst and flagellation. Each era has its own soul, which represents the spirit of the age; and the soul of the mediæval period was the soul of the anchorite or the nun who through long mistreatment of the body had almost escaped the fetters of man's existence and reached out with infinite longing toward the spirit land and the Christ upon the cross; a soul of infinite capacity for belief, which would have cried with Tertullian, "I believe it because it is impossible," had anything seemed impossible to its boundless credulity.

Yet from this night a new day was to be born, bearing but slight resemblance to the one whose noontide splendor had been followed by such unexampled darkness, yet in some respects brighter, and surely fuller of lasting hope. In this period of gloom, when the human mind seemed completely numbed, when literature was but childish stories and philosophy but barren scholasticism, the two inventions that have vied with steam and electricity in changing the face of the globe were brought to light. Gunpowder ensured forever the rule of civilization over savagery, making a cataclysm like the overthrow of Rome by the barbarians thenceforth impossible; and the printing-press brought knowledge, which had been the exclusive possession of the few, within the reach of all.

In fact, while the Middle Ages were the blackest in the annals of humanity, they were also the most fruitful. By an unparalleled convulsion the universe had been merged in chaos, and in the darkness titanic forces were at work, blindly and aimlessly fashioning a new heaven and a new earth. The deluge had swept away the civilization of Greece, so beautiful in its youth, but blasted so soon by a hopeless sterility and so withered in its age. Slowly from the flood there emerged a new civilization, less beautiful indeed, but pregnant with much greater things—a civilization in many respects unlovely, but which was to bring to the seething, suffering mass of mankind a well-being and a happiness that they had never known and which as yet shows no signs of the paralysis which so early benumbed the radiant limbs of Greece.

The most wonderful creation of those evil days was the modern soul. The soul of the Greeks, so serene and yet so limited in its aspirations, which we see in the down-cast eyes of the Muse of Cortona, had gradually changed into the dry, sterile soul of Byzantium, which had lost its hold on natural beauty, and could draw from the gospel of Christ only material for theological disputations. The tree had become forever barren, and naught remained but to cut it down and cast it into the fire. It was hewn down, and at first there grew up in its place only a wild, tangled undergrowth where poisonous plants and flowers too delicate for the sun were strangely intermingled; yet

from the midst of this there was to emerge the vast tree of modern civilization, whose far-reaching branches were to furnish to humanity the most grateful shelter it had ever known.

The mediæval soul is perhaps the strangest manifestation of man's spiritual essence, so full of vague strivings, of fruitless aspirations toward the infinite. All that was practical, all that was within its reach, it despised, while it stretched forth its arms with inappeasable yearning toward the unattainable. In a social organism where the body dwelt in swinish bestiality or was subjected to brutal hardship, the palpitating soul struggled upward toward the light with unexampled persistence. Sometimes in the darkness it beat its poor broken pinions in the dull air with absolute futility, at others it broke its clay prisons and soared unfettered in the blue vault of heaven. The horror and misery of the times, which generally makes people callous and indifferent to higher impulses, roused the men of the Middle Ages to seek to escape from their surroundings. Instead of the stoic system of schooling the proud spirit to master the body's pain, the soul sought to flee its corporeal bondage and to rise aloft into supernal regions.

And how different was this mediæval soul from that of Greece! Its serenity, its contentment, its directness of vision, all were gone, and in their place there had come vague aspirations, painful questionings, groundless fears, futile hopes, causeless palpitations, quiverings upward to a heaven of its dreams, plungings downward into a hell that seemed more real than the world of fact.

It is this soul that was bequeathed by the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and it is its awakening to the beauty of external nature and the perfection of Grecian art that makes that period one of such surpassing interest. At no other time have feelings so contradictory and so intense manifested themselves by brush or chisel.

There are men who consider unbounded scepticism a proof of supreme intelligence, who laughed at the Trojan War till Schliemann had demonstrated its truth, who scorned Manetho's table of Egyptian Kings till the monuments had established its correctness, and who assert that the Muse of Cortona is not a

genuine antique. But if it was not painted by a Greek, who painted it? What modern could have evoked this matchless vision of Greek serenity? Even Raphael could not have done it, despite his preternatural insight and his perfect technique. And if it is beyond his powers in a field that he had made his own, what lesser artist need attempt it? It seems to me that the men who dispute the authenticity of that marvelous picture lack that spiritual intuition without which criticism is but a rattling of dead bones.

The best and quickest way to acquire a realizing sense of the difference between the antique and the modern soul is to place the Cortona Muse and Leonardo's "Mona Lisa" side by side in the mind's eye; the one so serene, so content with the beauty of this world, transparent as a crystal lake beneath a cloudless sky; the other mysterious, unfathomable, knowing neither what she is nor what are her desires, dreaming of all things possible or impossible, capable of all; the first perfect in her way, the second dowered with a far more fascinating imperfection. As we look at them we perceive that while the outward aspect of humanity has undergone no vast alteration, there has been born a soul that is entirely new. Instead of simplicity there is complexity, instead of serenity there are self-torturing questionings and ineffable longings, instead of placid contentment there is a restlessness that finds no peace.

Compare an antique Venus, proud of her beauty, rejoicing in her own perfection, unconscious of her nudity, with the Venus of Botticelli, whose dreamy eyes are full of wistful yearnings for she knows not what, who feels that she is naked, and who will wrap about her the embroidered mantle that is offered with all the shrinking modesty of a nun.

The greatest difference between the art of antiquity and that of Greece is in the soul. The Greeks, seeking ever for the type, sought not only a faultless body but a soul of serene perfection. It was not the individual soul that they portrayed, but an exemplar of what the soul should be. With their vague ideas of a future state where the soul survived only in a joyless limbo, it was not a thing of great importance; but with the Christian conception of an eternity of bliss or pain to which our earthly existence

was but a momentary, though decisive, prelude, each soul became a thing of inconceivable concern and worthy of the deepest study. Greek art lavished its inexhaustible genius upon the body; Renaissance art looked chiefly to the soul; and many of its most exquisite manifestations, like the women of Leonardo and Botticelli, would be homely enough without that irradiation of the spirit that makes them things of marvelous beauty.

As women are endowed with souls subtler, more refined, more intricate than those of men, an art which deals with the soul is chiefly concerned with women; and in the art of the Renaissance the feminine element predominates as distinctly as the masculine in that of Greece. The painter seeks no longer for the ideal type; he studies each quivering soul and tries to fix it on the canvas. And, except in the case of Michael Angelo, it is the soul of woman that he loves the most. Leonardo seeks to fathom its mysterious and unsounded depths, Botticelli to represent its engaging wistfulness, Raphael to show us its sweetness and its truth. But all of them, save the gorgeous Venetians of the pagan revival, make the body of woman only a lovely tabernacle for the soul. And the soul that they show us is no ideal abstraction, the quintessenced perfection of a thousand souls, it is the palpitating soul of some individual woman, with all its joy and sorrow, its weakness and its strength.

There is probably much in Greek Art that we fail to grasp, much that we have grown away from so completely that we do not note its existence. Certainly no Greek could comprehend the most precious elements of ours. These vain reachings toward the infinite would be to him foolishness; these yearnings for a world different from our bright, flower-crowned earth would seem to him a manifestation of disease. His art is simpler than ours, and it is possible that we comprehend it all; but much that is most exquisite in the art of the Renaissance would be lost on him. The men of a few generations ago found the splendid music of Beethoven's "Fidelio" beyond their comprehension, and would have stood aghast before Wagner's colossal orchestration; while a Greek could have made nothing of Mozart's simplest harmonies. Our own age is that in which music attained its richest development, but it is likely that the human

soul was more complex during the Renaissance than at any other period. We are the children of the Middle Ages, but we have got so far away, we have learned so much from the pagan past and the practical present, that we are greatly altered. It is with us as with our language. It is a Germanic stock on which the French has been engrafted. They have now so completely coalesced that they form a united whole; but there was a time when they co-existed, when the bonds of neither were defined, when one man spoke chiefly French and another chiefly Saxon, with an ever varying syntax.

Such a time was the Renaissance. The world had awakened to the beauty of external nature and the perfection of antique art, but it still looked at them with the eyes of the Middle Ages. It was as if in a convent of nuns a Grecian Aphrodite should be exhumed. We can imagine the sisters gathered round, some charmed by her beauty, others shocked by her nakedness, many charmed and shocked at the same time, fearing lest it be a sin to look upon the heathen goddess, yet unable to turn their eyes away.

It is this conflict between different impulses and aspirations that gives to the Renaissance its undying interest and to its art its special character. The human mind awoke from its long sleep, which had been troubled by so many visions of beauty and horror. Slowly the new day lit up the world, and men's eyes opened gradually to the light. At first they saw dimly through the gray mists, then more distinctly, at last with the splendor of the full morning and with all the rapture of awakened youth tingling in their veins.

The Renaissance was the world's second youth, but how different from that of Greece! The youth of Hellas was a strong and healthy youth, the wholesome joy of young limbs basking or racing in the sunlight. The Greeks were children of nature, beautiful in a beautiful land. They were in perfect accord with their surroundings, as much at home as a wood-nymph in the forest, a sea-nymph on the waves. Their childhood had been free from care, their youth was blithesome and looked forward to the future with proud and confident glance. Unable to conceive of anything lovelier than the land in which they dwelt, with its pur-

ple mountains lifting their peaks far into the cloudless heavens, its umbrageous valleys through which there flowed rills and rivers of murmurous crystal, and its sapphire sea breaking forever on its golden sands and verdant promontories, they rejoiced as Nature's children, contented with their lot. They regarded themselves as the offspring of the flower-crowned earth, and exulted in her radiant beauty. They delighted in her smiles, and when they came to lie down upon her bosom for their final sleep, they regretted indeed to leave the pleasant sunlight, but felt no shrinking from a wrath to come.

Not so with the world's second youth. Its second childhood had been passed in darkness, frightened continually by stories of unspeakable horror and despair. It had been told that the fair sun was a baleful watch-fire, that the beautiful earth was spread before its eyes only to allure it to destruction. It had been brought up in the shadow of convent walls, and had been taught to turn its back on the gladsome day and to seek its happiness in ecstatic visions. When at last it was dragged forth into the light, it came half rejoicing, half reluctant, now longing to return to its ghostly cloisters, now delighting to disport itself in the clear radiance of the new day, and, as Goethe says, to bathe its breast in the morning red.

There was never a period like it. There was never a time when eyes so long accustomed to the darkness were so suddenly opened to the sun; when limbs that had so long been kept in fetters were so suddenly loosened and bidden to wanton in the free air; when hearts that had so long been shivering with terror were told that they might be glad.

But they could not be glad with the untroubled gladness that the Greeks had known. The bandage was taken off, but their eyes were as much blinded as charmed by the light. The shackles were removed, but the limbs had been too long accustomed to healthful exercise to move with ease or grace. They were bidden to rejoice, but the old fear still lingered in their hearts. Their childhood of ecstatic visions and maddening apprehensions had left upon them marks that could never be effaced. In the darkness the blithesome soul of Greece had died, and in its place there had been born a new soul, full of strange long-

ings, a quivering, ecstatic thing that spurned the earth, and sought with its feeble wings to fly to heaven.

Interesting as is the art of the Renaissance from its technical side, its most fascinating aspect is the development of this mediæval soul under its changed conditions, and its gradual adaptation of itself to its new environment.

And this soul was essentially feminine. The soul of antiquity was masculine, its virtues were those that became a man. But Christianity had exalted the feminine virtues of love, charity, forgiveness of injuries, chastity, patience and humility, until they had usurped the place once occupied by patriotism, courage, fortitude, generosity, and pride. And it is this feminine soul that the painting of the Renaissance reveals — not always in a woman's vestments, but often in the garb of manhood — a manhood on which a Greek would look with unspeakable contempt. Imagine one of these monks in ecstasy, with whom the pictures of the Renaissance abound, in a Greek palestra! With what scorn the youthful athletes and the strong, bearded men with their proud glance and their kingly stride would gaze at the poor wasted limbs and the eyes which, though wide open, saw not the beauty of the earth. They would deem the holy man a craven thing, a dreamer and a fool. They could not have understood his qualities even in a woman, and would deem them incompatible with the character of a man.

We can still comprehend these female souls imprisoned in masculine bodies; but we have grown so far away from them that it is only with an effort that we can bring ourselves into sympathetic touch. Most women can still love them; but to many they have become hateful.

During the Renaissance the soul of woman attained a development and a complexity that it has never known before and which it perhaps has never possessed since. Now the long battle between the naturalism of pagan ideals and the spritualism of the Middle Ages has been fought out. The opposing forces have been reconciled and the compromise effected out of which our modern civilization has grown. But at that time they were still in conflict, and the strife went on in every bosom that was not too blind to see the new light or too commonplace to feel the irra-

diation of the old. The shadowy cloister with its dreams of heaven drew men in one direction; the smiling earth with its promises of pleasure allured them in another; the first with the power of ancient habit, the second with the intensity of newly awakened desire.

But that was not all. The Renaissance was a period of extreme individualism. It is probable that there was never a time when the individuality of men was more strongly developed. Our civilization is now so compact, so well established, that it forces us all into the same mold. Then it was quite different. The awakened spirit of man was everywhere trying to shake off its fetters. Laws were feeble, and men usually righted their own wrongs either by the strong arm of violence or the insidious machinations of revengeful cunning. Public opinion was weak, and did not constrain men to conform to fixed standards. There was no public press to hold up to ridicule or censure eccentricities of dress or behavior. The limits of the possible and the impossible had not yet been defined. So each man was free to develop along his own lines and to follow his own instincts to their ultimate consequences. There resulted a great number of intense and highly individualized personalities. We know one of them, Benvenuto Cellini, perfectly, because he revealed himself without reserve. Such a man could not exist to-day. But in his own time he was nothing extraordinary. There were many that were like him, many others who in other directions were just as original and unrestrained. Some, like Sigismund Malatesta and Cæsar Borgia, had shaken off even the most elementary ideas of morality, and were merely clear-eyed beasts of prey. All were free, in thought, in speech, in manner. Each was himself as God had made him to an almost unparalleled degree. Society was not homogeneous, as it had been in the Middle Ages and as it is again becoming, but was composed of distinct units, loosely bound together by law and custom, and always ready to assert their independent existence.

And the women were as remarkable as the men. Outside of France, where, at least until the establishment of the present republic, there has always been a woman at the bottom of every-

thing, they have never been so influential. The world was keenly alive to every form of beauty, and of beauty woman is the most alluring manifestation. For her charms they had an admiration that was scarcely excelled by the Athenians as they watched Phryne rising as Aphrodite from the sea.

And there has never been a time when the female mind was more thoroughly cultivated. Women entered with enthusiasm into the study of the new learning. They mingled on terms of equality with the greatest scholars of their time. Shakespeare's Portia was no creation of the poet's brain. In the universities of Padua and Bologna women were professors of the civil law, and their lecture rooms were thronged with admiring scholars. A vastly greater proportion than at any later time were familiar with the Greek and Latin classics. This was partly due to the fact that most literature of value was in the dead languages and that modern tongues, in which women now excel, were then of slight importance. Still a mastery of Greek and Latin can be attained only by a strenuous exertion of the mind, and is proof of earnest study.

There was probably never a time when the education of women was so precisely the same as that of men. Everything that was deemed worth a man's knowing was equally open to them. Even the conventionalities of female modesty were laid aside, and the women who discussed with men the gravest problems of philosophy listened with them to the tales of Boccaccio and Masuccio. In fact, they mingled freely and on terms of perfect equality. Nothing was conceded to the supposed weakness of the feminine intellect. Whatever there was to be learned she was expected to acquire, and her ambition rose with every fresh demand. Some became distinguished jurists; others, like Veronica Gambara, Gaspara Stampa and Vittoria Colonna, were leaders among the poets of the age. Almost all were thoroughly versed in the philosophy of Plato, which so profoundly stirred the spirit of the Renaissance. It was in their salons that the most brilliant men of the age met; in their presence the most important questions were debated, and frequently the conversation was led and guided by the hostess. Even the famous courtesans, like Imperia and Tullia d'Aragona, were as remark-

able for their culture as their beauty. They held receptions which were thronged by the philosophers and poets of the time, and which were not despised even by distinguished ecclesiastics. Indeed, they repeated all the triumphs of Laïs and Phryne, and anticipated the reign of Ninon de L'Enclos.

But all this culture was infused into a mind that was essentially feminine; all these problems were propounded to a soul with all a woman's sensitiveness and her dreams of the ideal. Her training was the training of a man, but her soul was the soul of a woman; and while its vision was immensely extended by the light of the new learning, its essence remained unchanged. The conflicting impulses that warred in the breast of man warred in her tender bosom with far greater violence. With the conservatism of her sex she clung closer to the ancient faith; but with the curiosity of Eve she peered into the darkest corners that were revealed by the brightening dawn. At times she would dream of the ecstasy of St. Catherine; at others, she would join in the boldest disputations of the most advanced thinkers. To-day she would listen in wrapt attention to the frenzied preaching of a Dominican denouncing the world, the flesh and the devil in accents of fire; to-morrow she would mingle as a bacchante in one of the wild revels of the period, or would hear, smiling, though with downcast eyes, the licentious tales in which the age delighted. Her life was free, passionate, complete, as the life of woman has rarely been. Nothing was deemed improper for her to know; nothing was denied to her investigation. She was courted for her beauty; praised for her wit; encouraged in the display of her charms of mind and body; yet in the intoxication of her worldly triumph the still, small voice of faith whispered to her heart, bidding her cast all away and find her spirit's true repose in the cloister's echoing aisles; and often, beneath the burden of some bitter sorrow or in the mere ecstasy of religious fervor, she exchanged her splendid trapping for the dusky garments of a nun.

In art the women of the Renaissance achieved practically nothing; but that was because painting and sculpture were looked upon as mere handicrafts and not as elegant accomplishments. Yet, while they wielded neither brush nor chisel, they domi-

nated the art of the time. It is essentially a feminine art, concerned rather with the study of expression than with the production of types of physical perfection. It preferred painting to sculpture because the pencil can catch far better the fleeting manifestations of the quivering soul. Even its statuary is not sculptural, concerning itself rather with expression than with form. It is not probable that any statue of the strenuous period of the Renaissance would have been accepted by a Greek. We understand them; we know the feeling which the artist bodies forth with such consummate skill; we see in them an exquisite loveliness; but to a Greek they would be simply ugly. The soul that irradiates from them would have for him no meaning, and their irregular outlines would offend his eye.

Not only is Renaissance art feminine because it deals chiefly with the soul, which is woman's special province, but its works that allure us most are chiefly pictures of women. Apart from Michael Angelo's prodigious masculine creations, the female figures are those that arise before us when we think of Renaissance art. Splendid as are the masculine types that Raphael gives us in the "School of Athens" and the "Disputa," it is chiefly his incomparable Madonnas that we love. Inspired as is the face of the Monk that plays in Giorgione's "Concert," it pales from view beside the maddening beauty of his "Sleeping Venus." Noble as is the face of Leonardo's Christ of the "Last Supper" it is his "Mona Lisa" and his Madonnas that haunt our dreams. And so it is throughout. With the possible exception of Signorelli, it is ever in a female face that the artist reaches the highest point of his achievement. And the beauty which he seeks is not so much that of faultless lineaments as that which comes as a light from within. Often, as in the case of Leonardo and Botticelli, the faces would be positively homely without the soul that shines through them and makes them things of divinest charm. Only Giorgione, Titian and their followers loved physical beauty for its own sake, with the unquestioning rankness of a Greek.

Everywhere throughout the Peninsula the hymn was raised to woman's beauty. Her charms were the principal theme of the poet's song, the chief inspiration of the painter's

brush. Never has art loved woman so much and depicted her varying aspects with so much sympathy and power. The artists of Rome showed her in her strength; the Umbrians in her purity and her religious fervor; the Florentines in her mental strivings, her wistful longings, her unsatisfied desires; the Lombards displayed her honeyed smile that haunts the imagination with its unfulfilled promise; the great Venetians pictured her in the glory of the pagan revival, beautiful and proud of the satiny splendor of the flesh, while Correggio shows her in the palpitating ecstasy of pagan joy. Her every aspect of soul and body are revealed as never before or since in the serene beauty of Raphael, the saintly devotion of Perugino, the wistful sadness of Botticelli, the unfathomed mystery of Leonardo's smile and the sweetness of Luini's, the joy of Correggio, the matchless revelation of the body's beauty that Titian and Giorgione gave.

And the writers of the day pay an equal tribute to her loveliness. The *Asolani* of Bembo, the *Cortegiano* of Castiglione, the poems of Ariosto, in fact, all the literature of the time, is redolent with the charm of womanhood. At every court there was some presiding female genius, who gathered around her artists, philosophers and poets, and established what was perhaps the most delightful society that the world has ever known, where men and women loved beauty with a fondness that was truly Greek, where art, literature, philosophy and love were the principal topics of conversation, where thought and language were free as they have rarely been, and manners were refined to an ultimate perfection. Such courts were held by Isabella d'Este at Mantua, by Elizabetta Gonzaga at Urbino, by Veronica Gambara at Correggio, by Catarina Cornaro at Asolo, by Beatrice d'Este and Lucretia Borgia at Ferrara, by Catarina Sforza at Forli, and by many another whom we have not time to name. There they reigned with an absoluteness of sway that women have rarely known, queens over the hearts of their courtiers, sharing in all the thoughts of artists, poets and scholars, leading the culture of the time, and guiding men into pleasant paths of exquisite dalliance. Since the death of Pan, life had perhaps never been so worth living as beneath their smile. The

thunders of the Reformation, the shoutings of captains marshaling their forces for the religious wars that were to deluge Europe with blood and to plunge it into a gloom almost equalling mediæval darkness, fell upon their ears only as a faint murmur from the distant north. They heeded it not, and proceeded with their masks, their tourneys and their revels, discoursing sweetly of love and art, of music and philosophy, while beyond the Alps the cannon were being forged that were to lay low their proud battlements and the bands of religious fanatics were being organized who were to change their joy to lamentation, their silks and jewels to sackcloth and ashes, their freedom of thought and delight in learning to ignorance and superstition. And because we know the doom that was hanging over that bright Renaissance world, the black night of bigotry and wrath that was to follow so fair a day, it acquires that poignant interest that attaches to the things that we know are doomed to an early death.

The age of fanaticism and gloom that extinguished the light and joy of the Renaissance world is passing now — in fact, it has almost passed. Again we look upon the world and see that it is fair; again we realize that heaven is not reached by making earth a hell, but by making it as much like heaven as we can; that our eyes are given to us that we may see, our minds that we may understand. Again we are returning to the spirit of the Renaissance, chastened indeed and saddened, but still with its freedom of thought, its love of beauty, its delight in the world around us; and again the fair women whom Raphael and Titian loved, whose charms Bembo and Ariosto sang, smile to us across the ages, and awaken a new light in the eyes of their distant daughters.

G. B. ROSE.

Little Rock, Arkansas.